

BOOK REVIEW
The Threatening Storm, The Case for Invading Iraq
by Kenneth M. Pollack
reviewed by Joseph C. Piff

Copyrighted in 2002, this book is an incredibly well researched and a well organized presentation of the data we have supporting the removal of Saddam Hussein from his leadership position in Iraq. Mr. Pollack's credentials lend credence to his presentation of this material: he has been an analyst on Iraq for the Central Intelligence Agency and the National Security Council for 15 years.

This long book (424 pages) is divided into three parts: (I) Iraq and the United States, (II) Iraq Today, and (III) the Options. Part I details the history of how we got to where we are with Iraq. Part II explains what the author believes is going on inside Iraq based heavily on his analysis of information from many sources (The book is thoroughly referenced, with 44 pages of end notes.). Part III details the options as the author sees them, but based on his evaluation of factual and suppositional information and his contacts with senior U.S. Government officials. These options include the no action option, various intermediate levels of attack, and the full scale war option.

If you have any doubt that our current effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power is misguided, your doubts will be stripped away after reading this book. Particularly strong are the comparisons of Saddam with Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin (whom the author says Saddam has studied extensively) and the methods Saddam uses for decision-making (only people who support his views should speak; those with dissenting views are quickly shot).

As I was reading this book, all of the U.S. political and military moves leading up to the current war with Iraq were being made. All of this real information adds credibility to Mr. Pollack's analysis of the situation – he has gotten most of it right! And the reader finds out how he gets it right because he explains his rationale for each point. For example, France, Russia, and China do not want to see Saddam go away because they are making a very significant amount of money off of him. Most of the other Gulf region nations would be happy to see him go away, but more because it would get the large U.S. forces out of the region, although the threat to them that exists while Saddam is in power is also part of their thinking.

While most of the material in this book is now overtaken by events, the final chapter (12. Rebuilding Iraq) provides major insight into U.S. activities around the world after removing a threatening national leader and how we must do things differently in Iraq. Mr. Pollack believes that Iraq could become the model for democracy in the Middle East if the post-war rebuilding efforts are properly pursued. Although he expects them to be expensive (up to \$100B), the resources of Iraq can be used to pay some of the costs, and contributions from United Nations countries should spread the burden more equitably.

Should you read this book, especially now that war has begun? The book is an excellent example of thorough research presented in an organized, compelling manner. Since the author got so many of the political and military issues to date correct, the Rebuilding Iraq information is still interesting reading to see if it is pursued in the manner the author suggests.